TWO FAIR FRIENDS.

BY ELIZA F. POLLARD,

Author of "Robert Aske," "Avice," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XI.

A STRUGGLE.

"IT'S time I went to work again, sir. You've been very good to have me idling about all these months, but I'm fit for work now, at least light work, and I should like to be doing something."

"Of course," said Mr. Irving, "but it seems to me you had better remain here a little longer; you are not strong enough for hard work yet. Last week you had a bad attack again."

"I'm afraid I shall be subject to them more or less for some time. I want to go to my friend Wilson in the East End of London, and help him till I get some settled appointment. I do not suppose I shall be considered eligible for foreign mission work at present, but I shall try for it."

"I hope you will do nothing so foolish," said Mr. Irving.

Gilbert made no answer, but stood looking out of the window on to the garden, where Miriam was busy sowing seeds. He was still very thin and weak-looking, his face was white except for a slight hectic flush, his lips almost bloodless.

"He certainly does not look up to much," thought Mr. Irving, and laying his hand kindly on the young man's shoulder, he said, "Why are you in such a hurry, Gilbert? Surely you know you are welcome here as long as you like to stay."

There was a moment's silence, then Gilbert turned round, a slight colour on his pale cheeks, and his voice trembled as he said, "Thank you; you are very kind—too kind; but——" he hesitated; then, with a glance at Miriam, he added, "I have stayed already too long for my own peace of mind."

Mr. Irving's brow clouded instantly; a severe, a hard look came into his face.

"I would rather not understand you," he said. "Only assure me you have said nothing to disturb her."

"That I can most positively do," answered Gilbert. "You understand, however, I cannot remain here any longer."

"Certainly not," answered the Vicar, and he turned away.

Gilbert heard him leave the room, and presently he saw him standing in the garden beside Miriam, as if fearful of her safety. He smiled sadly. "I wonder whether she will miss me? whether she will guess anything when I am gone? I hardly think so, I have been so careful. Well, I'll write to Wilson and tell him to expect me the day after to-morrow," and he went to his own room.

"I think we'll keep that bed for forget-me-nots, like last year, father; it looked very sweet," said Miriam, "and that three-cornered one for heartsease. I hope to have some very fine roots from seeds Mr. Kirby gave me."

"Your garden always looks lovely, dear," answered Mr. Irving. "Miriam!"

"Yes, father," and she raised herself and looked at him, struck by something in his voice.

"My daughter, are you happy—quite happy and contented?" and as he asked the question he embraced her.

"What a strange question!" she answered. "Why should you ever ask it, father? Do I look unhappy?" and certainly the smiling, radiant face showed no signs of sorrow or vexation of spirit.

"I hope not," he said, kissing her; "but my daughter is so dear, so very dear to me, that it is only natural I am anxious lest this quiet, monotonous life should weary her, and her old father cease to be companion enough."

"Your garden always looks lovely, dear."

She laughed. "I have never thought of any other life," she answered. "I am perfectly happy."

Satisfied, he let her go, and stood watching her as she resumed her garden work. At last he said—

"Gilbert has just told me he intends leaving us in a few days; he seems to think himself strong enough to take up work again. He is going to stay with Wilson."

She stopped in the very act of dropping some seeds into the earth. "Gilbert going!" she said.

"Yes, of course; you know it must have come to that sooner or later, and really I think change of air may be beneficial to him."

"I don't," said Miriam, shortly, and resumed her work.

"Please, sir, you're wanted," said Susan, coming half way up the garden walk.

"Very well, say I'm coming," answered the Vicar. He stood looking down on Miriam, longing yet not daring to interrogate her; and she continued smoothing the earth over the seeds she had sown, without so much as raising her head.

At last he moved away. For the first time he felt there was a cloud between him and his daughter, and his anger was as bitter as it was unreasonable against Gilbert.

When her father's footsteps had died away, Miriam rose, drew off her garden gloves, and went quickly across the lawn, out by the gate, and in a few seconds she was in Dr. Nunn's sitting-room. Miss Bessie was there alone, busy as usual. She looked up as Miriam entered, and something in her visitor's face struck her, for she said, "Has anything happened, Miriam?"

"Gilbert is going!" answered the young girl, leaning with one hand on the table, and looking at Miss Bessie.

"Well, my dear, I suppose you expected him to go one day," said Miss Bessie, in a matter-of-fact way.

"Some day, yes!" answered Miriam—"when he was well. But you know yourself how those attacks of fever return, and how they prostrate him."

Miss Bessie did not answer immediately; she resumed her cutting-out.

"Well?" said Miriam, impatiently.

The elder lady lifted her eyes; they were very soft, one might almost have thought tearful, as they rested on Miriam's troubled face. "My dear," she said gently, "I have thought for some time past it would be better for him to go."

The colour mounted to Miriam's brow, her eyes flashed, then she threw her arms round her old friend's neck and burst into tears.

Gently Miss Bessie stroked the dark hair, saying softly, "There, there, I was afraid it was so. You must be brave, Miriam. Think of your father; you must live it down."

Yes, she knew she must; she never questioned the possibility of doing anything else. She had been so happy during the last few months, so unreasoningly happy, and now—well, she thought she had only to pick up life where she had dropped it six months ago.

Brushing her tears away, she smiled. "How stupid I am!" she said. "I'm so glad it's only you, my dear old friend," and she kissed her. "You see," she continued, "I had got accustomed to him, and—and—" but again the tears choked her, and she was obliged to turn away.

Miss Bessie's eyes were dim. "My dear, you must remember how devoted your father is to you; it would break his heart to lose you."

"Don't," said Miriam. "I have no reason to think that Gilbert cares for me more than for any one else."

"I am afraid I have, though," Miss Bessie thought, but she kept it to herself, merely saying, "All the more reason for not allowing yourself to fret at his leaving."

"Just so," said Miriam, rising. "If only he were a strong, healthy man! But I feel as if he were going away to die. Now I must get back, or father will be looking for me," and once more kissing Miss Bessie, she went home slowly and thoughtfully.

Her father was still occupied, and had not therefore missed her; so she was slipping up to her own room, when on the stairs she met Gilbert. They just looked at each other; neither spoke—no words were needed. She would have hurried by, but he took her hand, and, with a supreme effort, smiled upon her, saying, "It is the story of the ewe lamb, Miriam. Forgive me, dear, and good-bye."

"Good-bye," she answered, and passed on.

CHAPTER XII.

A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

"YOU might have known it would happen, Vicar. I've wondered at your blindness. Why, anyone with eyes in their head could see he was in love with her," said the Doctor.

"It never struck me," answered the Vicar. "I felt so sure of Miriam. I remember being nervous before he went out five years ago, but who would have thought of an invalid—a man whose life hangs by a thread; besides, supposing ever he got well, he must know I should never allow Miriam to go out to those pestilential countries."

"That is quite another matter," said the Doctor; "but to shut two young people up in the same house in winter weather for six months and not expect them to fall in love with each other is asking too much of human nature."

"I had hoped Miriam's life was so happy with me that she would not think of marriage."

"I know," said the Doctor, "that was your theory, but it was false from the beginning. Why, before he went out to Zanzibar I foretold this would happen if ever he came back again, ask Bessie."

"Well, he's gone now. I'm sorry, for I was fond of him; but of course the whole thing was impossible. Good day," and Mr. Irving turned into the Vicarage garden.

Gilbert had been gone a week. There had been no fuss. Mr. Wilson had written, saying he should be very glad to have him, and that he had taken a room for him; and on the following day he went. Susan was the only person who attempted remonstrance, and with a word Gilbert himself silenced her. Only when he bade the Doctor and his daughter good-bye, and Miss Bessie came to the door to see him off, he said to the latter, "You'll write to me sometimes, and let me hear how you all are?"

"Yes, I will," she answered, and she meant to do so.

Miriam and her father never once spoke on the subject; they resumed their old life, as much as it is possible ever to take up something which has been dropped. Gilbert had been so completely one of themselves that now in everything they did they missed him. His name was continually coming to their lips, and being, so to speak, held back. For the first time there was a feeling of restraint between them, and it was whilst chafing under this new phase that the Vicar had unburdened himself to the Doctor, and that the old gentleman had, as he expressed it to his daughters, given him a piece of his mind. The only effect, however, was to make the Vicar irritable and sombre. He looked upon himself as an aggrieved person, and Gilbert and

Miriam as the aggressors; and yet he could find no fault with either of them.

Miriam certainly acted her part bravely. She worked as hard, if not harder than ever in the parish; attended to all his wants, wrote for him, read with him. An outsider could have seen no difference in her from the Miriam of old, except it were that she was a trifle paler, a little more silent, perhaps.

It was, as the Doctor said, "the Vicar's own jealous humour which made all the mischief." He took to doing what he had seldom done before, dropping in at the Doctor's, and, when he found Bessie alone, bemoaning his hard lot; and she sympathised in her gentle way, at the same time managing to slip in a word here and there to exonerate the young people.

One day, when he had been more than usually mournful, because Miriam had complained of a headache, Bessie ventured to say—

"But I do not think you are quite just. I do not suppose Miriam thinks of leaving you—in fact, I am sure she does not; and I know Gilbert has applied for a foreign station. I think his getting it doubtful, for this hot weather has quite prostrated him. More obedient children you could not wish for. I do not believe they think it possible for Miriam to leave you. What can you ask for more?"

This was a great deal from Miss Bessie to her Vicar, whom she had never in her life before ventured to contradict; but on the present occasion he accepted the implied rebuke quite meekly, and went home and shut himself up in his study. There Miriam found him walking up and down, looking the picture of misery, when she went to fetch him at tea-time.

"Father dear," she said, putting her arm in his, "we had better have it out! You are making yourself perfectly miserable, and me too. Yes, I do love Gilbert. I suppose I have always loved him, though until he came back I had no thought of such a thing. I have never hesitated one moment—my choice was made from the first. I shall never leave you—no, not even for him, and I shall not be miserable; there is too much work in life, and I love you too well, my dear, dear father," and she laid her head on his shoulder, as she used to do when a little child; and he gathered her in his arms and kissed her forehead.

"Thank you, my darling; thank you, my Miriam, for that assurance. I know it comes from your heart, and is true."

"Of course it is," she answered simply; "and now come to tea."

But he did not see her when, kneeling beside her bed, she prayed that God would sanctify her choice, both for Gilbert and herself, and as she prayed the tears rolled down her face more for him than for herself.

"I shall go up to town on Monday, Miriam, for the missionary meeting. There will be some excellent speakers; I should like to hear them."

"Very well. I suppose you will return the following day," said Miriam.

"Yes, certainly," answered her father; and when Monday came the Vicar went up to London.

It was a crowded meeting, and in the list of speakers he saw the name of Gilbert Moran, and on the platform he recognised him, looking gaunter and whiter than when he left Porton. Being the latest arrival from the African mission, it fell to his lot to read the report of the work done. He did so, and then earnestly, eloquently pleaded the cause of East Africa and Uganda. He told them of those who had suffered and died for the faith, and of those who, surrounded by dangers, were awaiting help from the motherland, and he finished enthusiastically by saying he only prayed God to restore his health sufficiently to enable him to return to the field of his former labours. He was greatly cheered when he descended from the platform, but he looked utterly exhausted.

"He may wish it, but he'll never go out there again," Mr. Irving heard a young clergyman say to another. "I know Wilson, with whom he is staying, and he told me the doctor says he'll get all right in time if he stays in England, but that if he goes out he is a dead man; and he's trying desperately to get sent out."

"Rather singular," said the other gentleman.

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"A gentleman to see you, sir," and the servant handed Gilbert a card. He started when he saw the name, "The Rev. C. Irving," and, rising, went himself to the door.

"Pray come in," he said, holding out his hand. Mr. Irving took it, and then followed him into the sitting-room.

For upwards of an hour they were closeted together in earnest conversation. At length Mr. Irving rose, saying, "Then you distinctly understand my conditions are—no more foreign work (it is not as if you were deserting your post; your health, I might truly say your life depends upon this matter), and you will be my curate for one year, or until you obtain a living."

"I can only say yea to everything," answered Gilbert. "You are too good, too generous."

"I am neither," answered Mr. Irving. "I am a disappointed man, who finds he has made a mistake, and is doing his best to remedy it in the way least painful to himself. You had better come back with me this afternoon; it will be the easiest way of breaking the news to my dear girl."

"I ask for nothing better," answered Gilbert.

There was quiet rejoicing that evening at the Vicarage. The Doctor and Miss Bessie came over to offer congratulations, and the latter, standing by Mr. Irving, said, "I am glad you have had the courage to make them happy."

"I think your reproachful face and words of rebuke are, in a great measure, the cause," replied the Vicar.

"Why, I never said anything. I would not have taken such a liberty," she answered.

Mr. Irving smiled, saying, "Then you did it unawares."

Before the summer was quite over, there was a very pretty wedding in the village church, and after a short honeymoon the young couple returned to the Vicarage. Happily the winter months glided by, and in the early spring Gilbert was offered a living about a dozen miles distant from Porton.

"If you would like us to remain with you, I am quite ready to refuse it," said Gilbert to Mr. Irving. "You know I have a small fortune of my own, and I am quite content to remain your curate."

"No," said Mr. Irving, "it will be better for you to have a home of your own. I have made up my mind—or, rather, we have made up our minds, Miss Bessie and myself, to keep house together. When the young birds fly away, the old birds will settle down together in the deserted nest. I should never have done it as long as you remained with me, Miriam, but now—well, I think I have made up my mind."

"I am so glad, father," said Miriam, and going up to him

she kissed him, whispering as she did so, "Do you know, I think she has loved you all her life."

"I think so, too," said he, and his voice was slightly husky with emotion.

The Vicar's wedding was a very quiet one, but few brides were ever happier than Mrs. Irving when, the ceremony being over, she crossed the Vicarage threshold as its lawful mistress.

"But, remember, I have never been unhappy all these years," she said to her husband that first evening of their home-coming, "for I knew that what God did was well done."

THE END.

CHRISTMAS TREES.

MERRY England holds her fair head very high about many of her little fads and usages. When they are assailed by an alien and progressive age, she is ready to protest, or to fight for them in a spirit of true loyalty, and preserve them as honoured relics of a bygone and revered past. Some, however, of her dearest fancies have been introduced from other countries. As a nation, England is perhaps more willing to credit another with generosity sufficient to lend than to confess that at any time in her chequered history she has been reduced to borrowing. At the same time it must be owned that she is indebted to other nations for some of her most cherished customs.

Long, long before her children danced round a dazzling Christmas-tree the little ones of the German Fatherland looked for it as part, and a not unimportant part, of the season's cheer. There seems little doubt that for this, Germany's Christmas present, she must acknowledge a debt of gratitude.

A Protestant legend tells us that Luther, when travelling on one occasion, was much impressed by the beauty of the sky above him. Christmas Eve, and in all probability clear and frosty, the stars shone out resplendent, sprinkled in myriads over the canopy of heaven, glorious in their brilliancy, shining in all their beauty as they did on the first Christmas Eve, when one of their number safely and surely led the Magi to the lowly manger in Bethlehem. It was no wonder that Luther was struck with the sight; the stars of heaven have ever filled thinking people with wonder, and although astronomers have made such wonderful strides in their science, there is much still remaining for speculation in these mysteries. Luther returned to his home, and immediately procured a small fir-tree, which he adorned with innumerable little wax lights or tapers, for the amusement of his children. The dark foliage of the fir may have represented to his mind the blue-black density of the midnight sky, the flickering tapers shining in humble imitation of the twinkling stars.

Whether this legend gave rise to the institution of a custom so popular as the Christmas tree is not certain, but it does not appear to have been introduced into this country until about four centuries later, when the Prince Consort brought one to St. James's Palace, not long after his marriage with our Queen. But whatever may be the exact date of its introduction into this country, it is but a recent innovation when compared with such time-honoured customs as the burning of the yule-log, the cutting of mistletoe, the waits and mummers singing their carols. All these are of far more ancient repute—indeed, so old that in these days of novelty and change they stand in imminent danger of dying, not a natural death, but one of cold neglect. Yet it is worth while to try and preserve any innocent thing that has once expressed and satisfied the feelings of a nation. And many of our Christmas customs appeal very strongly to the sentiments, and conjure up memories that few would willingly let die.

In Druidical times the cutting of the mistletoe was attended with a great deal of ceremony. A procession, led by the bards singing canticles and hymns, was formed; then came a herald, preceding three Druids carrying implements for the purpose. Immediately there followed the Prince of the Druids, accompanied by all the people. Armed with a golden sickle, it was his office to mount the oak and cut the mistletoe. With much dignity he presented the boughs to the other Druids, who received them with profound respect, and in their turn, on the first day of the new year, distributed them among the people, crying as they did so, "Mistletoe for the New Year."

As an innovation on our ancient yule-tide festivities, the Christmas-tree met with a most warm reception. It worked its way into the conservative affections of British people as few other foreign ideas have done, and won for itself a place with marvellous rapidity. It proved indeed a Christmas gift of no mean value. English children were not backward in accepting so good a gift; they seized it eagerly, joyously; they grasped it with infinite delight, and will doubtless keep it in a tight embrace for many centuries to come. Parents, too, received it with open arms. Fathers and mothers who do not care to see their little ones enjoy that part of their life which stands alone in its capacity for enjoyment are happily in the minority. Alas! too soon—and well they know it—childhood merges into youth, and youth into full age. The keen sense of enjoyment is blunted, the stern things of life take its place—sorrow and sickness and sadness, disappointments, anxieties, and partings. Parents must think of all this; their children must pass through the fire; it is unlikely that any will in after life enjoy an immunity from suffering; and as they watch the excited little faces they will take a delight in the ill-suppressed curiosity to know the contents of each mysterious parcel, the fruit of Christmas-trees, and will thoroughly enjoy each merry peal of laughter, each exclamation of surprise and satisfaction, every look of enjoyment so plainly discernible in expressive baby faces.

In the north of Germany the Christmas-tree is not always a pine or fir tree, neither are the arrangements in connection with it identical with our English customs. On Christmas Eve a room is set apart and lighted up by the children, into which the parents are on no pretence allowed an entry. A large bough cut from a neighbouring yew-tree is used. It is fastened securely on to the table, and

A Private Peep.

lighted by innumerable tapers, and adorned by fluttering scraps of coloured paper, tinsel, and other pieces of bright and glittering material. Under its decked branches the children lay out the presents they have prepared for their parents. Deep down in the recesses of their pockets are concealed sundry little offerings, later in the proceedings to be given to each other. When all is ready the door is opened to the parents, and the presentation is carried on under a wealth of grateful kisses. By the time this is over, the flickering tapers have burnt low in their sockets, and, catching the yew twigs, lend an additional excitement to the evening's gaiety, much appreciated by the youngest members of the family.

The parents' turn comes next, but not until another night has passed, and Christmas Day has dawned, when their presents to the children are laid out on the table. But

this is a far more serious business than that of the day before. It is customary on this day for the mother to have a private interview with her daughters, and the father with his sons. During this interview the parents point out the faults to which each child has been more especially prone, at the same time commenting on their most praiseworthy characteristics. This parental ordeal gives place, in other parts of the country, to a different ceremonial. A person known by the name of Knecht Rupert, clad in high buskins, a white robe, a mask, and an alarming wig, receives from the parents the presents they intend for their children, and he goes the round of the houses, distributing them to the several recipients. This quaint individual stands to the children of North Germany in place of Santa Claus, but he distributes his gifts with greater discretion. His arrival is looked for, not only with eager delight by the possessors of clean consciences, but also with terror by juvenile delinquents; for he is mean enough to inquire into the conduct of each child, and in the event of the result of his inquiries proving unsatisfactory, he deals out to the parents, instead of a toy for the child, a birch rod, strongly recommending its frequent use. This is decidedly hard, but we may safely conjecture that most parents would err on the side of clemency, and that justice, however just, would be tempered with mercy on Christmas Day.

Many of the settlers in the state of Pennsylvania, in America, are of German descent, and Christmas Eve is observed by them with very much the same ceremonies as it is with their kinsmen in the old fatherland. Here, as there, the Christmas-tree spreads forth its branches laden with fluttering tinsel, and sparkling with many miniature candles. For their presents these children also must have patience, and they hang up their stockings as some English children do who expect a visit from old Santa Claus. Christmas Eve fades into night; the Christmas-tree, robbed of its treasures, is taken away; the dancing and games, the music and joyous laughter are all over, and it is not until the morning light glances through the curtains that they expect to find those stockings mysteriously filled. Here we have an old friend with a new face in the person of Kriss Kringle. Like his kinsman, Knecht Rupert, he is an advocate of that instrument of punishment the use of which he recommended to the German parents, and it is said that in Pennsylvania the bulging stockings do not always contain a pleasant surprise. It is supposed that a second agent is employed on this errand, a personage of the name of Pelsnichol, and that his name is in some way connected with that of the charitable St. Nicholas. But surely, since Pelsnichol is the punisher of vice—Kriss Kringle being the rewarder of virtue—an inuendo such as that is unwarrantable where a saint of so benevolent, if legendary a reputation is concerned.

And now the Christmas-tree and its accompanying merriment has been, for half a century at least, an English possession. Children in all grades of society, of all classes, love its glittering pageant. In private life, in schools, institutions, and homes, they eagerly anticipate its joys, and look for its generous burden with impatient longing. By what eager little hands its rich harvest is reaped! and with what keen delight are its treasure-strewn fields afterwards gleaned for such trophies as coloured scraps of paper, sheets of silver tin-foil, bright gelatine off elaborate crackers, bits of tapers, and numberless odds and ends, the *débris* of the evening's fun! All this is of priceless value to most children; indeed, it is doubtful whether the presents—perhaps expensive, certainly the outcome of careful forethought—confer more pleasure than do these, that "grown-ups" may call rubbish, give to countless little ones.

The pine is one of the commonest of trees. Its timber furnishes, perhaps, more of the necessaries of civilised life than any other. Builders, carpenters, shipwrights, turners, can all speak of the utility of its wood. The fir-tree possesses a host of good qualities, but surely among its many charms and uses—maybe last, but not least—is that whereby it gives pleasure to many a young life saddened by harsh treatment, soured and aged by premature cares, marred by neglect—forlorn little orphans, hapless little waifs and strays, weary little invalids in hospitals and homes.

Let us hope that the Christmas-tree may bring joy and happiness this coming Yule-tide to many a little child, and that—

> "Voices all unused to laughter,
> Mournful eyes that rarely smiled,
> Trembling hearts that feared to-morrow,
> May be from anxious thoughts beguiled."

Nay, let us not merely hope—let us *do* something to ensure happiness to the little ones at this bright season.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

"WHAT means this glory around our feet,"
The Magi mused, "more bright than morn?"
And voices chanted, clear and sweet,
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born."

"What means that star," the shepherds said,
"That brightness through the rocky glen?"
And angels answering overhead,
Sang, "Peace on earth, good will to men!"

'Tis eighteen hundred years and more
Since those sweet oracles were dumb;
We wait for Him like them of yore;
Alas! He seems so slow to come.

But it was said, in words of gold
No time or sorrow e'er shall dim,
That little children might be bold
In perfect trust to come to Him.

All round about our feet shall shine
A light like that the Wise Men saw,
If we our loving wills incline
To that sweet Life which is the law.

So shall we learn to understand
The simple faith of shepherds then,
And, clasping kindly hand in hand,
Sing, "Peace on earth, good will to men."

And they who do their souls no wrong,
But keep at eve the faith of morn,
Shall daily hear the angel-song,
"To-day the Prince of Peace is born."

SECRET POWER.

TWO ladies were overheard talking. Said one, "Do you know Mrs. ——?" "Oh, yes," was the reply; "she is a good woman." "Yes, she is so *full of love* herself that she seems to fill everybody else with the same spirit; she draws everybody to her." Then the voices were lost in the crowd, and we heard no more with the outward ear, but a voice kept singing in our heart:—

"Love is the grace shall live and sing
When faith and hope shall cease,
And sound from every joyful string
Through all the realms of bliss."

"But now abideth faith, hope, love; and the greatest of these is love." Ah, yes! "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, . . . hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth."

What a model wife must she be who is full of grace like that! What a model person anywhere, in any station! Can I, even I, aspire to such a model? "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. . . . God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," and "herein is our love made perfect," "because the *love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*"

FOR MOTHERS AND WIVES.

BY PHYLLIS BROWNE.

Have a Place for the Children's Toys.

MOTHERS who wish to train their children to be orderly, should remember that the most effectual method of doing this is to *help* them to be so; not to scold them for being disorderly. One way of helping is to set apart a place for the children's toys, and teach them to use it. A mother who found that her boys were apt to make a litter with their toys adopted the following contrivance, and found it answer excellently.

Having noticed that her children liked to be where she was, and loved the light, warmth, and cheerfulness of the sitting-room, she had a strong box, standing on castors, with a lid fastened on by hinges, put in a sunny corner of the room, covered it with bright-coloured material, and fitted it with a soft cushion on the top, and flounces round the edge. She then had a deep tray made, extending half way down, and resting on side slats. Both the tray and the bottom of the box were then divided into compartments, with strips of wood nailed crosswise, and in each compartment was pasted a label containing the name of the toy which had its "home" there. The light toys were of course put in the tray, the heavy toys were placed in the bottom of the box. At each end of the box was a little shelf made of plain wood, covered with oilcloth, which could be put up when wanted, and let down when not wanted. Two chairs of the right height for the boys to use with their shelf-table were put at the sides of the box; and in a corner near was a waste-paper basket, in which the boys were expected to put their rubbish, and empty it every day themselves.

When matters were thus far arranged, the mother made a number of little tickets, and wrote on them the names of the boys, giving each one the card bearing his name. Whenever a toy belonging to both was taken from its place, a ticket had to be deposited in its room, and this secured possession for a reasonable time. Whenever a stray toy was found lying about, it was called a "vagrant," and put aside for a time. The box was named "the children's castle," and they were understood to be responsible for its condition. After it had been in use a little while, the mother found that the children were more orderly, and agreed with each other better than was the case when they had one common receptacle for their toys.

Of course, an arrangement of this kind involves a good deal of "trouble," but mothers know that if children are to be properly cared for, trouble must be accepted. Indeed, any trouble is preferable to a wear and tear of nerves and temper. As the inventor of this box used to say, "In dealing with children, it is far better to make them feel that they are living under certain laws, than to interfere personally on every slight occasion. The secret of managing children is to govern quietly, and without much perceptible interference."

How to Destroy Moth in Carpets.

It is a most annoying circumstance when moth gets into carpets, and housewives troubled in this way would often be glad if they knew what to do to cure the mischief. When the evil is not sufficiently serious to necessitate the removal of the carpet, it is advisable to turn up the ends of the floor covering, and wash the floor with carbolic soap, then rub carbolic soap both upon the floor and upon the edges of the carpet itself, renewing the treatment every day until the moth disappears. Another plan which has been found effectual is to lay a piece of wet cloth upon the carpet, and rub a hot iron over it. The steam thus produced permeates the carpet, and kills the grubs contained therein.

Baby "Must not Touch" Certain Things.

Mothers often make a practice of putting out of baby's reach things which he is not to touch. The method is not a wise one, although it might be advisable if mothers were sure that all through life they could put temptation out of the way of their darling. Even if they could accomplish this, it would be much better to give the child early a lesson in self-control, which may be of service to him as long as he lives. Tell baby, therefore, that he is not to touch certain articles, and see that he obeys the prohibition. The mother who has made her baby understand very early in his young life that when she says "no" she means "no," has saved both herself and baby from many a pang. The lesson is not an easy one to give; baby may rebel against it, and the mother may feel that she would much rather let him have his own way; but it is a most valuable lesson nevertheless.

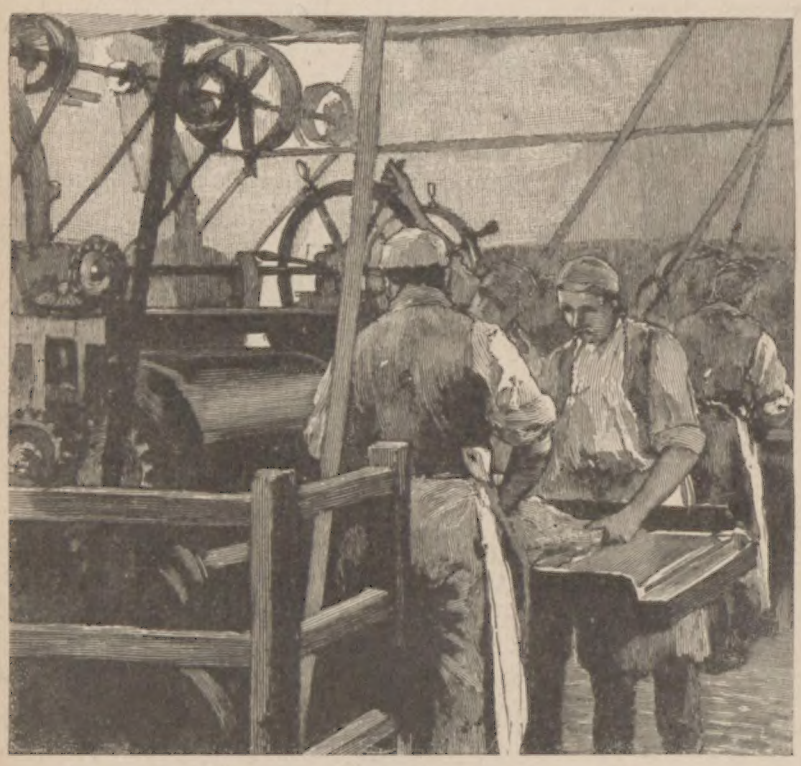
A Good Christmas Cake.

This recipe was invented by a clever cook who is now dead: Take two cups of brown sugar, two cups of butter

(or one cup of butter and one of lard), five cups of flour, one pound of raisins, one pound of currants, one pint of milk, the yolks of four and the whites of three eggs, half a cup of treacle, two teaspoonfuls of ground cinnamon, one spoonful of ground cloves, one of mace, and two of baking-powder. Melt the butter a little, then beat it well, and add the sugar and eggs gradually, beating well between every addition. Continue beating and add the treacle, the spices, the raisins (chopped), the currants, and the flour mixed with the baking-powder. Put the mixture into a tin well lined with buttered kitchen paper, and bake in a moderate oven. If one large cake is made, it will need to bake about three hours. Stir confectioner's sugar into the white of egg with the juice of half a lemon, as much as will make it of the consistency of soft paste. Ice the cake with this, spreading it with a knife dipped in water.

A CHRISTMAS BOX OF BISCUITS.

CHRISTMAS-TIDE is a time for all good things. It is a time for home joys, renewed friendships, and family love. Our minds and hearts are raised to a higher tone than perhaps at any other season of the year. There



A Corner of the Mixing and Rolling Room.

is gladness in the air—the old song of "peace and good will to men," and all that is bitter and unforgiving seems out of place. Yes, and it is a time of feasting. Not the thoughtless, ungrateful indulgence to excess; but with most of us the table is more sumptuously spread, and in our happy mood the "fruits of the earth"—the abundance with which God has blessed us—seem doubly inviting. Of course, "mother" is queen here; for is it not she who prepares the tasty dish? or puts into practical reality the famous recipe for some delicious confection? "Father" may provide the means, but it is her taste and skill which guide all to an appreciated success.

Fortunately, the housewife is not entirely dependent on the work of her own hands and the help of the oven for all the Christmas delicacies. In these go-ahead days her wants are anticipated, and the manufacturer steps in with many an excellent article in the way of food. Among such, perhaps, no one is more popular at Christmas time than the baker—the cake and biscuit-baker by preference. How tempting are his wares! how palatable his crisp, cleanly dainties! what variety and even ingenuity are apparent, for instance, in the simplest Christmas box of biscuits! As we pick them out and taste one after another according to our fancy, we cannot help a thought arising as to how they were produced, they are so far above the ordinary efforts of home bakery.

Well, gentle reader, I have just paid a visit to Biscuit Town—Messrs. Huntley and Palmer's world-renowned factory at Reading, Berkshire—and I can assure you that it was exceedingly interesting. The works and premises, including workshops for packing-case making, etc., and flour and other stores, are very extensive, and between four and five thousand people are employed; while the firm has its own private railway. But I was most anxious to see how the biscuits themselves were made, so we proceeded at once to the mixing mills. Here we found a series of large revolving pans, in which materials for special kinds of biscuits are mixed into dough. Each mixer is waited upon by a number of men, who carry buckets of flour, sugar, treacle, milk, eggs, and other tempting ingredients. One set of mills is dealing with gingerbread-nuts; another is engaged with Milk, Empire, Colonial, and various well-known kinds of biscuits. In the centre of each revolving pan is a shoot for the dry mixed meal that is prepared in a room above, and this is tempered to taste and consistency with the wet articles and the sweets just mentioned. When the material is thickened into dough, it is put into great presses and rolled, leaving it in flat, firm masses, very fine in appearance, quite silky to the touch, with almost a polish on it.

But, besides the pans, there are also mixing-drums, for different biscuits require different methods. These drums are large, busy machines. Inside them are agitators, with long arms to go round and round, working up the paste and fitting it for the breaking rollers, which await it close by. It comes out in solid slabs of dough, which the breaking rollers spread into long, pliable breadths of thick material. These go at once into what looks very much like a printing

The Private Railway at Biscuit Town.

In the Bakery—Feeding the Ovens.

machine, only that, instead of paper, it is fed with rolled dough, which is carried along automatically, the cutters cutting out the biscuits, and the dies stamping them ready for baking. Then the cut and printed biscuits are removed on trays to the ovens.

As we continued our tour we paused to notice hand-made biscuits, rolled in the old way, and cut into shape with the hand-block. Here were also raspberry biscuits, the jam being laid in with a kind of palette-knife ; and, also by hand in an adjacent department, German rusks and French rusks were being prepared. The rusk is simply a plain bun or cake cut in two and roasted. Another hand-machine was for making a sugary kind of cake or biscuit, called African and Queens. It was not unlike a sausage-machine, from which the prepared material was wound out in long zig-zags that were cut into ropes and despatched to the bakery. Near by were the moulding machines for filbert biscuits and other forms for dessert; while it was interesting to see produced such popular sorts as the Osborne, Abernethy, Arrowroot, Lunch, Picnic, and Toast.

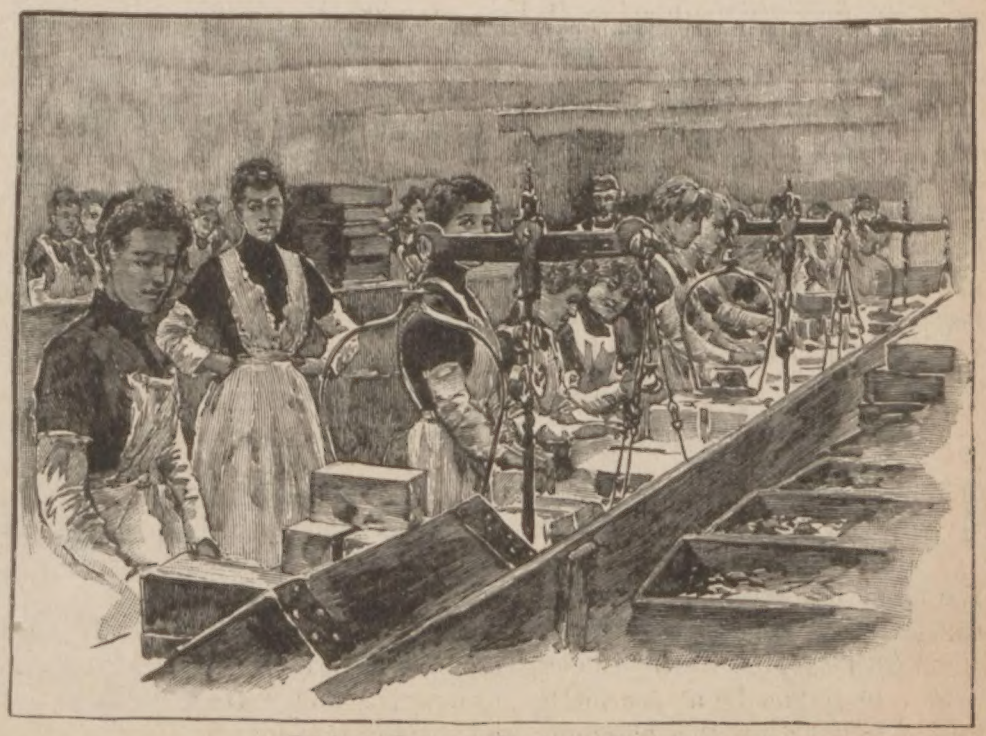
Cracknel biscuit baking brought us to another pleasing corner of the works. After the cracknel is mixed and rolled, it does not go straight to the oven ; it undergoes a middle process of boiling. There is some amount of steam present ; but the atmosphere of Biscuit Town in general is never oppressive, and the place is always clean. There is, too, the wholesome flavour of wheat and flour, eggs and cream in it, with once in a way a slight smell of fruit and jam.

But we must not forget to follow the trays of biscuits that are going in one continuous stream to the ovens from the cutting machines. These machines are very similar ; in fact, in walking through the works you notice that one operation is repeated over and over again. From floor to floor you see the same methods, yet all resulting in different kinds of biscuits. As you proceed you encounter cheery labourers conveying stores to the mixers, and anon white-aproned men with shining buckets of milk, in which yolks of eggs are floating, giving the mixture a rich appearance. Into various steam-moved receptacles these creamy loads are emptied, while others go to the revolving pans. The whole place is busy and peculiarly pleasant.

The baking of the biscuits is an interesting operation. There is a vast block of masonry. You feel the heat of it, but only moderately as you approach. The ovens debouch as it were into a large serving-room. You cannot see into them, but they have a row of wide apertures, and a kind of revolving band or tray or hot plate. These apertures are fed as fast as possible with trays of biscuits of every shape and form—round, square, thick and thin. Of course, we wanted to see the biscuits just baked, so passed round to the other side. Out they came in layers, falling one over the other into tubs and baskets, yellow and brown and white, all sharp and crisp and perfect in form. Thence they travel to the sorting-rooms above, where hundreds of workmen are receiving, sorting, and labelling them for their various journeys.

We now passed on to the packing department. Women and girls are here employed, as well as men and boys, but the former work in separate rooms. The women wear over their own gowns large sleeved linen aprons, their hair is neatly dressed, their hands scrupulously clean, and their whole appearance in keeping with their work, in which they are very dexterous. Adjacent is the decorating-room, where the sugar-coated cakes and biscuits are ornamented. The artists are mostly girls. Each is provided with a bag of icing, which terminates in a pointed tube. As the decorator moves the tube over the article to be adorned, she squeezes the bag, and the icing-sugar exudes in such amount as is required, and with very pretty results. This work reaches its perfection in the wedding-cake room, where we saw some elaborate examples.

Of course, we had a peep into the various workshops



Filling Fancy Biscuit Boxes.

where carpentering and tin-ware making were being carried on, and concluded by surveying the finished cakes and biscuits safely packed and labelled, all ready for the grocer and consumer.

Such are, in brief, the processes and labour necessary to give us this Christmas our usual supply of biscuits. Few of us can realise, without a visit to Biscuit Town, the immensity of the work required in this branch of table luxury. Perhaps our account, with its accompanying illustrations, will convey some idea of it to the reader.

"SPEAK LIKE YOU DO WHEN YOU LAUGH."

A BABY of three years once preached me a sermon, and I pass it on for the benefit of other downcast and despondent ones who need to learn to "Rejoice evermore."

"How is the baby?" I asked drearily, standing at the foot of the staircase leading up to a chamber where the little one lay ill. I was tired, unhopeful; my mood came out in my tone.

"'Peak like you do when you laugh," called the weak little voice upstairs; and if I ever felt rebuked by an angel, that was the moment. The words have come to me a hundred times since. I hope I am the brighter and the cheerier for them.

"Speak like you do when you laugh." That means sparkle with gladness and good will. Those fretful lines at the mouth-corners don't come from laughing. The weary ones around the eyes have another origin. But the plainest outward sign of despondency is that in the tone. The sick feel it, that is why "visitors are forbidden." Little children are infallible weather prophets; they will not "take to" you. And you and I—neither sick nor young nor old, but busy and often tired—we love—yes, that is the word—we love the bright, loving, laughing, happy voice. "Speak like you do when you laugh." M.

A SUNNY DISPOSITION.

ONE can scarcely estimate the value of a sunny disposition and a sweet temper, and the effect they have on the household life. It is said of a lovely woman who had cultivated a sweet spirit that "whether it were her husband or her child, her sister or her brother, a guest in her parlour or a servant in her kitchen, a postman or an errand boy, a pensioner for charity at her door or an assistant in a shop—whoever it was to whom she spoke, her eye looked sympathy and the tones of her voice expressed kindly feeling." If our readers will follow her example they will find hundreds of ways in which they may do good in Christ's name, and help to lessen the world's misery and increase its joys.

COURTESY AT HOME.

IT is in the home, above all other places, that the true man or woman will strive to please and soothe. This for two reasons—first, because it is right, in order that the home life may be what it is meant to be. Both husband and wife should feel that, no matter what trials and perplexities may come to each in the contact with the outside world, there will be in the family gathering a haven from which strife, dispute, contention, and unkindness will be shut out, and into which will come only tenderness, consideration, and confidence. That there are so many examples of the reverse only emphasizes the "ought to be." Second, the example displayed should have consideration. If the boy is to be "a little gentleman" when away from home, he must be taught, and not by precept alone, but by example as well, when he is at home. And the influence of the example of the father upon the son and of the mother upon the daughter will be much more potent than any amount of advice or any rules of etiquette.

It often occurs that children must be admonished of error in deportment of which they have been either innocently or wilfully guilty. This should always be done in the gentlest and kindest manner, and privately. Even if the reproof be deserved, that which is tempered by the accents of love and kindness will touch far more deeply than when voiced hastily and with unkindness of tone. It is probably not true that family "manners" are less courteous now than formerly. The reverse is often the fact; but it must be admitted that there is yet room for a great deal of improvement. Somehow, somewhere, there has crept into popular acceptance the idea that with marriage, or at least with the waning of the honeymoon, the "lover days" are over, and the kindness, gentleness, and attention which existed during the courtship have no longer a place in the domestic economy of the wedded pair. Not for a moment, we earnestly think, should such a lowering of the sacred bond be permitted.

ONE THING AT A TIME.

"DANIEL QUORM" tells us this story:—"When I was a little boy, helpin' mother to store away the apples, I put my arms around ever so many o' them, an' tried to bring them all. I managed for a step or two. Then out fell one, an' two or three more, till they was all rollin' over the floor. Mother laughed.

"'Now, Dan'el,' says she, 'I'm goin' to teach you a lesson.' So she put my little hands quite tight around one. 'There,' said she, 'bring that, an' then fetch another.'

"I've often thought about it when I've seen folks who might be doin' ever so much good, if they didn't try to do too much all at once. Don't go tryin' to put your arms around a year; and don't go troublin' about next week. Wake up in the mornin' and think like this: 'Here's another day come. Whatever I do, an' whatever I don't do, Lord, help me to do this—help me to live it to Thee.'"

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

THE MOTHERS' COMPANION for 1894 will contain a valuable series of Practical Papers on Every-day Nursing, by E. M. WATERWORTH; articles of special interest to Mothers, by DR. GORDON STABLES; bright, helpful talks, by MRS. SKINNER, on "The Master's Messages to Women"; and a new and extremely interesting series of articles by PHYLLIS BROWNE, besides many other attractive features.

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The January number will contain the opening chapters of A NEW SERIAL STORY, by JENNIE CHAPPELL, entitled

"BY THE WAY OF THE VALLEY."

The Editor will feel grateful to the readers of THE MOTHERS' COMPANION if they will kindly do what they can to make the magazine known amongst other mothers who would find it helpful.

A MOTHER'S NOTES ON DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

THE dark, dull days of December give us but little inclination to think about new dresses, or, in fact, new things of any kind. A comfortable mantle which covers the entire dress, a felt hat, and a pair of good boots are most essential for both mother and daughter to possess. Still, as Christmas comes this month, and the younger members of the family, at least, will be having invitations to social gatherings, it will be found necessary to make some preparations. Where a new dress cannot possibly be done without, it will be wise to get one that will do duty at Christmas gatherings, and then be laid aside to come out fresh when the bright spring days are here. However, very pretty finishing touches can often be made to a partly worn dress, by the addition of a lace bertha and cuffs, which will render a new dress unnecessary. Then there are so many pretty stuffs which could be made up into a blouse-bodice at a very small cost, and this will quite alter the appearance of the ordinary winter dress, and make it fit for most occasions. Figs. 29 and 32 in this year's magazine show designs of blouse-bodices of this kind. These are still on sale, and can be supplied in any size our readers may wish.

Fig. 47.

Fig. 47 shows a lady's dress. The design is a fashionable one, but is more elaborately trimmed than some of our readers will think necessary. The revival of the gigot sleeve, worn by our grandmothers and great-grandmothers, brings the large puff lower down the sleeve, instead of being raised so much on the shoulder as to make the wearer appear very wide in the back, as well as high-shouldered. The body of this dress fastens under the pleated front, and the Zouave jacket, turned back with revers, is caught together under a rosette of velvet. The epaulette, which falls over the sleeve, is set on to the Zouave jacket. The skirt is gored at the top, and fits the waist without pleats in front, but the back is gathered. From the knees a deep flounce is set on; this is lined, and there is no need for the material to be underneath. A band of velvet, with a rosette, finishes the waist.

Fig. 48.

Fig. 48 is a little girl's dress of a very pretty but somewhat elaborate design. Still, we do not think our readers will find it very difficult to make. The body is short-waisted, and the skirt is set on in pleats. A strip of material, getting narrower towards the waist, goes up the front of the dress the entire length. This piece is corded on, and the upper part is edged with revers of dark velveteen. The sleeve has two puffs at the top and a deep cuff below.

Fig. 49.

Fig. 49 shows a little boy's suit. Some people object to the loose sailor suit for winter wear. A suit of this shape is certainly more cosy and warmer. The knickers are of the ordinary shape, and can be lined or not, as desired. Pants of flannelette are very comfortable for winter wear, and if a good quality is procured will wear well for little boys, though scarcely strong enough for the older ones. The coat is after the order of the Norfolk jacket, but the pleats are left loose instead of being stitched down the whole length of the coat, and the fulness is drawn in with the waistband. A little turned-over collar completes the neck, and the full sleeve is finished with a cuff. The coat buttons under the front pleat, and the sleeve, cuff, and knickers are trimmed with a row of buttons.

Fig. 50 is a lady's morning apron. The skirt is made wide enough to go all round the dress skirt, so that there is ample protection. The bib is square in front, and fastens with straps, which go over the shoulders and button on to the waistband.

Flat patterns can be supplied. Figs. 47, 48, and 49, 6½d. each; fig. 50, 4½d. Address, "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, E.C.

Fig. 50.

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